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# **THE PORTRAIT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL UNFAIR TREATMENT IN GLORIA NAYLOR'S THE WOMEN OF BREWSTER PLACE**

## **THESIS**



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### CHAPTER III : GLORIA NAYLOR'S LIFE EXPERIENCES

**RELATED TO BLACK WOMEN STRUGGLE..... 30**

3.1 Biography and Life of Gloria Naylor ..... 30

3.2 Gloria Naylor's Writing career ..... 33

### CHAPTER IV : THE PORTRAIT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL

**UNFAIR TREATMENT IN GLORIA NAYLOR'S**

***THE WOMEN OF THE BREWSTER PLACE***

4.1 Domestic Violence and Social Unfair Treatment..... 39

4.1.1 Domestic Violence ..... 39

4.1.1.1 Physical Abuse..... 40

4.1.1.2 Verbal Abuse ..... 43

4.1.1.3 Psychological Abuse ..... 46

4.1.2 Social Unfair Treatment ..... 48

4.2 Gloria Naylor's Feminist Idea

*In The Women of Brewster Place* ..... 52

4.3.1. Personal Defensibility ..... 53

4.3.2 Female Bonding (the sisterhood) ..... 55

**CHAPTER V : CONCLUSION ..... 59**

**BIBLIOGRAPHY ..... 61**



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 The Background of The Research

Feminism movement is a huge phenomenon. Every now and then women's idea keep growing and still debatable. The ideas of women liberation and fight against the patriarchy system have played a significant role in building and sustaining the movement of female liberation. Realize it or not today we are still living in a world that keep the patriarchal system grows well. Women are still in the second position, under the oppression, and controlled by men. Women just know what they must do, not what they have to decide. As the attempts to fight the patriarchy system women do some actions, one of them is through the literary world. Women share, write and criticize how the society treats them. Perfectly this is not an easy work, but women keep struggling through this way. Women are treated unfairly and cruelly, they have to face sexism from men whom view women as a thing who should not to be respected.

Since race also becomes the main issue in feminist movement, this effort becoming harder toward the black women. They have to face completely unfair treatment from black men and even white women also become an obstacle for them to be independent; they face the sexism of black men and the racism of white women. As Patricia Hill Collins stated in *Defining Black Feminist Thought*: "The Black Feminist Movement was formed to address the ways sexism, racism, and classism influence the lives of black women whose needs were ignored by the



black men of the Black Liberation Movement and white women in the Women's Movement" (20). The passage strengthens the goal of black feminist movement, free from sexism and racism. Moreover African-American women also demand their needs to be fulfilled. Those needs could be self-actualization, where every human being feels free to do anything in reaching the achievements in life.

Meanwhile in United States, feminism movement has been growing around since 1910. The lowest position of African-American women in America has been became the main issue of black feminist thinkers and activists in the United States. Since the problem of black women seems very complicated and harder than others phenomenon of feminist movement before, the writer has chosen *The Women of Brewster Place* by Gloria Naylor as the novel that is going to be analyzed.

Gloria Naylor is an African-American female writer who bravely explores the condition of her people through the literary work. This novel is her first work where she describes some domestic violence and social unfair treatment toward African-American women. With her incredible ability in writing and building the dramatic story, this work gets so many appreciations from many parties. Moreover, in this novel the readers also find some of her personal experiences as African-American woman affected the story. Her personal experiences have strengthened the reader to the sense of oppressions faced by black women and how miserable their life used to be.

The novel talks about a painful life and ultimately of hope. The book focuses on seven women who live on dead-end street at Brewster Place, which is

dark and badly crowded area. Their environment further complicates their lives. This work is quite complicated, there are so many problems described in; racism, religion, education, the legality of pregnancy, family relationship, parenthood, poverty, lesbian issues, urban violence, sisterhood and of course male domination. The women are forced to rely on each other when the world seems to shut them out. Despite their differences, *The Women of Brewster Place* is bound by a sense of community and sisterhood that enables them to deal with everyday pressures they face in the male-domination society in which they live.

There are several reasons why the writer chooses to analyze Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place* to be analyzed. First, as one of literary canon, Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place* is believed as one of literary works which contained the issue of black feminist which claimed as feminism minority where its existence used to be ignored especially in America. Secondly, the writer is interested in analyzing the struggles of African-American women to survive in a world that never been kind to them just because they are black. African-American women experienced racism from white people. They also suffered from black men. The oppression in domestic life happened in any relation between male and female in family. It could be between husband and wife, father and daughter and even mother and son. Furthermore, black women experienced sexual harassment, abusive treatment and gender discrimination. Those oppressions which were experienced by African-American women did not just setting them up in a painful life, but in the other side it has raised black women rebellious spirit. They fought against that oppression to reach their



freedom collectively and that oppression creates and strengthens the female bonding and sisterhood among them. The survival of African-American women can be seen in their struggle against male domination in term of marriage and social life as well as the poverty. Besides, this research aims to distinguish some oppressions that experienced by seven Afro-American women as reflected in *The Women of Brewster Place* and also to describe the struggle of Afro-American women in gaining their self-actualization. Therefore this research entitles "The Portrait of Domestic Violence and Social Unfair Treatment in Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place*".

## 1.2 The Identification of The Problem

Gloria Naylor's *The Women Of Brewster Place* portrays black women' life, how the seven women in the novel; Mattie Michel, Etta Mae Johnson, Kiswana Browne, Luciellia Louise Turner, Cora Lee and The Two (Lorraine and Theresa) treated in society, since it has been crucial issue of black feminist that they are discriminated in life; social life, working life, domestic life, race, class and gender. They try to fight against the white to have the same right and lessen racism. The research focuses on the black women position; in domestic life, how they oppressed by black men, unfair treatment in sexual life and how is they struggle against those discrimination (the reaction) from the point of view of black feminism.

This novel is full of dramatic tragedies which show domestic violence toward the black women; physically, psychologically and verbally. Physical



violence are happened when the husbands or father treat women in the family, no matter she is his wife or daughter, they are kicked, hit and even they are killed. Besides, verbal and mental violence happened commonly just because of little causes. The women are treated unfairly by the mocking and screaming right over their face. Not only the way they are mocked at, the words are also rude and hurting. Those dramatic tragedies do not only happen in domestic life, in social life the black people are also treating unfairly, especially the black women. This is why there is a special district where the black people live (Brewster Place). They do not have any equal right in social life. This novel describes the pain of the black women' life. They are oppressed and also being placed in the lowest class in social life.

The similarity background of seven major characters in the novel where they treat unfairly and oppressed by some parties conspires in creating the struggle against any kind of oppressions. They meet then somehow they start to live together as sisters. This is the starting point where female bonding and sisterhood appeared, they live together and fight the oppression in togetherness.

### **1.3 The Objective of The Research**

The aim of this research is to show how the Afro-American women survive in the land named Brewster Place and also this research is about to deliver the Naylor's idea about being African-American women and her personal experience as African-American woman. This research examines how the condition of Afro-American women oppressed by men and society and through

this analysis, the writer focus on the domestic violence and social unfair treatment that keep setting up the African-American women as the lowest class in domestic and social life.

#### 1.4 The Scope of The Research

In this analysis, the writer is about to analyze the life of seven Afro-American women whose treated cruelly by the black men and society. The analysis of the novel will be guided to answer three research questions:

1. What kind of problems that faced by the Afro-American women in the novel ?
2. How do the seven Afro-American women in the novel struggle to survive from domestic violence and social unfair treatment ?
3. What are Naylor's feminist thought in *The Women of Brewster Place* ?

#### 1.5 The Review of Previous Studies

*The Women of Brewster Place* by Gloria Naylor published on 1982 and it has received so many appreciations from any parties. It is proved by the achievement as the winner of the American Book Award in 1983. As found in Universitatea "Petru Maior", Târgu-Mureș, Romania a journal by Corina Puscas entitled *Gloria Naylor's Style in The Women of Brewster Place*. She analyzes this work from language style perspective. Then she concludes, that Naylor uses several very effective stylistic devices related to diction, imagery and syntax. Corina Puscas found that Naylor combines Standard English with Black



Another research has been done by Jennifer Agustia. She entitled her thesis "A Portrait of Domestic Violence Toward Black Women As Seen In Alice Walker's *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*". In this thesis, Jennifer Agustia focuses her analysis on the attitude of black men toward black women, how the black men treat the black women cruelly seems like black women just for the thing which are blamed for the dying in economic life in their family. Furthermore, Jennifer Agustia creates the understanding about how black women are underestimated by their own community even by their family especially father or husband (2010).

The last previous study about feminism is a thesis entitled "*Women's Struggle Against Patriarchal Restrictions As Found in L. M Montgomery's Anne of the Island* " by Gitta Morena, Padang: English Department of Andalas University, 2007. In doing analysis she uses feminist approach, *woman as writer* by Elaine Showalter and Kate Millet's theory. The thesis talks about the struggle of several women in against the patriarchal oppression to get the equality in marriage, working place and education. As a result, she finds that women are not weak and passive person that should be controlled by men. Moreover, women can escape from the domination of men and can be more active person that has an equality rights with men (2007).

What makes this research different from Corina Puscas, Marilyn Nance, Tetty Royani, Jennifer Agustia and Gitta Morena is the core of the discussion. Corina Puscas sees Naylor's novel from language style perspective where she found the combination of Standard English with Black English. Marilyn Nance concerns on the



theme of Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place*. She argues that is what truly happened in everyday struggles of black women in contemporary America. Tetty Royani, Jennifer Agustia and Gitta Morena in their thesis using the similar feminist theory but different object of the research. While in this thesis the writer focuses on the portrait of African-American women's life in domestic life, social life and also showing the Gloria Naylor's feminist idea through her work.

### 1.6 The Theoretical Framework

To gain the purpose of the analysis, the writer applies expressive theory. This theory compares the story in the novel with actual idea of the author. It may be true, as MH. Abrams maintains in *A Glossary of Literary Term. Seventh Edition*, that : "Expressive criticism treats a literary work primarily in relation to its author. It defines poetry as an expression, or overflow, or utterance of feelings, or as the product of the poet's imagination operating on his or her perceptions, thoughts, and feelings (51). Abrams point from the passage above is literary work commonly having relation with the author. The relation isn't must be things called individual experiences in real life, It could be coming from surrounding; the social condition or even the thought that influenced by perceptions and feelings. An author doesn't have to live in exactly similar condition in the story she/he writes. She/he could write one condition just by expressing what is on her/his mind. In this case the writer needs external/supporting data that describe the Naylor's black feminist idea related to the novel. Her thought and feelings about the movement of black liberation agenda will be needed in actualizing this research.

Elaine Showalter explains in *Towards a Feminist Poetics* the two varieties of feminist criticism; women as reader where woman as the consumer of male-produced literary work including the images and stereotypes of women as the subjects. The second term is woman as writer where woman as the producer of textual meaning with the history, themes, genres and structures of literature by women (qtd. in Newton's 268). In this research the writer applies feminist criticism of Showalter's theory women as writer or "Gynocritique" in constructing a female framework for the analysis of women's literature to develop new model based on the study of female experience (269). Meanwhile in relation to the female writing tradition, Showalter in *Beginning theory: An Introduction to Literary and cultural theory: 2nd ed* also divides the three phase of women's writing; the first phase is feminine phase (1840-1880), a phase where women writers just imitated dominant male artistic norms and aesthetic standard in writing. The second phase is feminist phase (1880-1920) a condition of female writing is radical and often separatist positions are maintained. Female phase as the last phase (1920-present) which looked particularly at female writing and experience (qtd in Peter Barry, 123). The writer sees that *The Women of Brewster Place* is one of literary work which is written by women and also deals with the third phase of women's writing. Gloria Naylor as the author tells the struggle of seven Afro-American women in Brewster Place who underestimate, oppressed and treat cruelly by black men and society.

In Guerin's book *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, explained that "feminist examine the experiences of women from all races and



classes and cultures, including for example, African American, Latina, Asian American, American Indian, lesbian, handicapped, elderly, and Third World subject” (197). Here in this research the writer focuses on Afro-American women, since it’s been the main issue of unfair treatment in case of racism and also sexism toward the black women. In order to get sufficient analysis; this research uses black feminist literary criticism. It deals about how black women treated and also their struggle toward the society (male domination especially). Black Women who participated in the feminist movement during the 1960s often met with racism. It may be true, as Gill Plain and Susan Sellers say in *A Historical of Feminism Literary Criticism* :

“Contemporary black feminist criticism came into being in the late 1960s and early 1970s, fostered by the Civil Rights Movement and developed in conjunction with the Second Wave of American feminism, which was dominated by white women, and the Black Power and Black Arts movements, which were dominated by black men” (154).

Beside the historical background of how black feminism in America started, the passage above also explain that this criticism focusing in many cases on black men’s physical and psychological oppression toward black women in the context of white domination of all black people. The concerted efforts of black women writers, critics, as well as activists, are essential factors in inscribing race and ethnicity as criteria in feminist criticism. As Katherine Anne Porter stated in The Southern Quarterly Journal entitle *Black Feminist Criticism and Drama: Thoughts on Double Patriarchy* :



“By the middle of the 1980s, women of color begin to question the basis of mainstream feminist theory, the domination of the feminist movement by white women, the omission of the experience and works of women of color in feminist theories and critical analysis, and the inadequacy of the single focused feminist critical theories to the multiplicity of factors that constitute their experiences and inform their writings” (161).

From the quotation above, Black women in particular consistently use their experiences, cultural practices and history as women in fictional works and as the basis of their critical tool. Since black women is oppressed by patriarchy, black feminist observe that their oppression toward them as a woman and as black people. As Lorraine Bethel stated in *A User—Friendly Guide. Second Edition*;

“Black feminist literary criticism offers a framework for identifying the common socio-aesthetic problems of authors who attempt to fashion a literature of cultural identity in the midst of racial/sexual oppression. It incorporates a political analysis that enables us to comprehend and appreciate the incredible achievements black women...” (qtd. in Tyson’s 106)

The black feminist idea through literary work not only let the author tells the real condition of black women in which they face patriarchy, oppression and any other abusive actions but also lead us to catch the meaning of being black women; their life, their struggle and the culture where they live that set them up in the lowest class. Besides the black women movement in literary world also proposed by Barbara Smith in her essay “Toward a Black Feminist Criticism”, she stated:

“When black women’s books are dealt with at all, it is usually in the context of black literature which largely ignores the implications of sexual politics. When white women look at black women’s works they are of course ill-equipped to deal with the subtleties of racial politics. A black feminist approach to literature that embodies the realization that the politics of sex as well as the politics of race and class are crucially interlocking factors in the works of black women writers is an absolute necessity” (Smith)

Smith’s main point in this essay lays a foundation for the explosion of both Black feminist critical theory and the creative writings of Black women in the 1970s and 1980s. Her argument exposes the flaws of considering literature through either the exclusive lens of race, as Black literary criticism tends to do, or the exclusive lens of gender, as predominantly White feminist criticism tends to do. She suggests that it is Black women who are in the best position to create an effective criticism that provides an integrated consideration of the roles played by race, gender, class, and sexuality in literature.

### **1.7 The Method of The Research**

The writer uses some steps in doing the research. The process consist of three steps; collecting data, analyzing data and presenting the data. Firstly the data were collected by doing library research, the data consist of main data and secondary data. The primary data consist of the dialogue, narrative and any other significant information taken from the novel and the secondary data are taken

from books, articles or journal and online media that give supporting information to the primary data.

The second step is analyzing the data. In analyzing the data from *The Women Of Brewster Place* by Gloria Naylor, the writer firstly collect all of the data which are considered match to the analysis. Then classify the data into each group, and analyzes them by using black feminist criticism in term of domestic violence and social unfair treatment in the novel. The writer uses the black feminist criticism as the theory. Furthermore, the writer uses the statement by Barbara Smith in analyzing “The Women of Brewster Place” by Gloria Naylor.

The last step is presenting the data. Those data are described in form of words. As Robert C. Boghan dan Sari Knopliken state in *Qualitative Education: an Introduction to the Theory and Method* that: “Qualitative research is descriptive, the data are collected in the form of words or pictures rather than the numbers” (28). The written result of the research contains quotations from the data to illustrate and subsisted the presentation. The result of qualitative research is in form of words and described to convey a better understanding about the data and the result of the interpretation of the data.



## CHAPTER II

### PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF *THE WOMAN OF BREWSTER PLACE*

This chapter discusses in brief the element of fictions of *The Women of Brewster Place* to give more understanding of the novel. This chapter also come into being as the proven media in applying the theory; to see the correlation between primary and secondary data. Since literary works has both intrinsic and extrinsic elements and both of them are inseparable, analyzing some elements of fiction; characters, plot, setting and theme is the first step before move to main analysis. This chapter may lead this research to be more scientific, keep stick on the scope of the research and getting a fair interpretation.

#### 2.1 Characters

As found in *An Introduction To Literary Studies* by Mario Klarer, he stated "Character is a figure presented in a literary text, including main character or protagonist and minor character of protagonist. Major or protagonist character is the central figure in a drama or narrative, and minor or antagonist character is opposing character that causes conflict" (134). Protagonist character usually gets the reader sympathy and positive attention, while the antagonist gets the negative image from the reader because of the bad attitude.

Klarer also explain the other characters types, "A typified character in literature is dominated by one specific trait and is referred to as a flat character. The term round character usually denotes a persona with more complex and differentiated features" (17). It means that the flat character attitude is never change, perfectly has a consistence act and thought in the story. The round character is a complicated one; it is probably

changing anytime because of any kind reasons. The changing is also caused by an unpredictable reason. This kind of character must gives color in the story, no matter it brings something good in the story or even it changes the story amazingly.

In Gloria Naylor's *The Women Of Brewster Place*, there are seven major characters. Each character has their own chapter. Those chapters are related and contributed in building the story. Also there are several minor characters that should be analyzed because of their influence toward the story.

### 1. Mattie Michael

Mattie Michael, a major or protagonist and flat character because from the beginning of the story she does not show the personality changes. She is a matriarchal figure of this group. She lives in a religious family, and physical violence often happened in her family. Her father domination keep controlled the family life; anything must be under his permission. This experience shaped her to be a strong woman. She escaped from her family after she had a baby from a man named Butch Fuller, a man who never gets fascination from Mattie's father just because of the difference in religion. Mattie decided to take care of her son alone and walk away from her family, as the following passage "I can't put you through that," she whispered. "Right now I can't give you much, but you're too little to see this room anyway. All you see is mama, right ? And you know mama loves you and accepts you—no matter how you get here." (27). Mattie struggles in taking care of her son alone is her own decision. It also one of act that show women power to the reader, no matter how hard her life is, no matter how miserable the black women journey in escaping the oppression, all they want just to be independent and happy.



## 2. Etta Mae Johnson

Etta Mae Johnson is a major and round character whose personality change because of the social treatment that influences the way of her life. Spent teenage years in constant trouble in Rock Vale where had no place for black women. Her terrible experience of being black turned her into a woman who pursues the happiness in her own way. She would like to have a better life by finding a rich man. The only reason of loving someone depends on how rich he is. She is an independent and passionate woman searching for love and good times only. As this following passage; "Etta turned an indignant face toward Mattie. "The only thing I see is that you're telling me I'm not good enough for a man like that. Oh, no, not Mattie Michael, I've always travelled first class, maybe not in the way you'd approve with all your fine Christian principles, but it's done all right by me. And I'm gonna keep going top drawer till I leave this earth." (69). She keeps her way in getting the happiness by finding a rich man, her way is absolutely not what Mattie assume as the right way to be happy. However, Mattie keeps her respect to Etta. Then Etta goes in her way, where at the end of her story when she falls in love with a man in a church, he is good-looking, wealth status, but after sleeping with him, she realizes it was all just a fantasy and that he wanted only sex. She is feeling broken, but then she realizes that she is all wrong for so long. Etta turns to be a woman who gives more value about money, happiness and relationship. Money is less important, all she needs to find is the true happiness.



### 3. Kiswana Browne

Kiswana is a flat and also a major character, act constantly in one way since the first she appears in the story. She is a young woman from a middle class black family. Because of her idealistic and yearning to help others (the black people), she decided to leave her wealthy family, she dropped out of college and moved into Brewster Place to live among other African-American people. She resents her conservative parents and other middle-class values, whose view the other black (low class) as the people that uneducated and do not need to be respected. Kiswana feels that her family has rejected their black heritage. When her mother comes to visit her they are debating Kiswana's choice of neighborhood and her decision to leave school, it is clearly describe as the following quotation:

"Oh God, I can't take this anymore. Trying to be something I'm not, mama!! Trying to be proud of my heritage and the fact that I was of African descent. It that's being what I'm not, then I say fine. But I'd rather be dead than be like you—a white man's nigger who's ashamed of being black!" (85). She wants to do something real, feel what the other black people feel as the minority. Kiswana thinks that she is not like her mother, but when her mother got angry, Kiswana has to admit that she still admires her mother, even though they had different perspective of being black. But Kiswana keeps walking in her line; fight for black people humanity right.

### 4. Luciellia Louise Turner

Luciellia Louise Turner (Ciel) also a flat character in the story. Her husband decided to leave her because of his jealousy of their children and also

people around Ciel. She cried and almost surrenders in this condition, her husband felt that he won, She thought that Ciel cried because of his leaving. But this irresponsible act demand Ciel to keep struggle and she did it just for the children, “—a tall skinny black man with arrogance and selfishness twisting his mouth into a strange shape. And she thought, I don’t feel anything now. But soon, very soon, I will start to hate you. I promise—I will hate you” (100), one thing that he did not realize, that silence is something that symbolize a promise. A promise, soon, very soon she will start to hate him. She done it sooner, soon enough to saved the baby.

### 5. Cora Lee

Cora Lee is a round character because her personality in the beginning is different with the end of the story. She is a wife, a mother who totally taking cares of the children. Her husband never put attention for their children and he also treats Cora Lee cruelly that caused a kind of physical problem for her. She keeps having babies, taking care of them because she loves their baby-thing like a doll of her childhood and she will lose interest when they grow up; “Look,” Cora Lee said, “If I ran to the hospital every time one of these kids bumps their head or scrapes their knee, I’d spend the rest of my life in those emergency rooms. You just don’t know—they’re wild and disgusting and there’s nothing you can do!” (117). The previous sentence explain much about Cora Lee’s revengeful when the children grow up. But lately, at the end of her story when Kiswana offered Cora Lee and all of her children to watch a play, there at the play Cora Lee realize that she is wrong for so long. Her children would not be little forever, and she feels



better after that moment. The only reason for her to keep continues her life is her children, she does not need any figure of father for her children, she believes she can do that alone.

#### **6. The Two (Lorraine and Theresa)**

They are lesbian, the lovers who try to hide the truth about their relationship. Both of Lorraine and Theresa had bad experience when they were in a relationship with man. Those bad experiences shaped them to be a lesbian. They assumed that with woman is much better. But even though they were in a relationship, there were still patriarchy inside. Theresa (Tee) act like man, who wants to have total control of Lorraine. Theresa is a strong-willed, commanding woman who tries not to care what anyone says about her. Tee tries to be a leader and controlled Lorraine; "You're a lesbian –do you understand that word ? –a butch, a dyke, a lesbo, all those things that kid was shouting. Yes, I heard him ! and you can run in all the basements in the world, and it won't change that, so why don't you accept it ?" (165). The passage describe how Theresa is trying to convince Lorraine that they are right by being a lesbian by shouting and yelling at Lorraine. Meanwhile, Lorraine is the opposite of her partner, Tee. At the beginning, Lorraine still did not realize Tee's keep trying to control her, but as time goes by she realized that she can not be whatever she wanted. Lorraine is overly concerned with the way people treat and judge her for her sexuality. When finally Lorraine falls in love with a man named Ben, Tee get angry and really disappointed, and keep trying to make Lorraine sure that is wrong. But Lorraine is starting to find her freedom; "That's just it, Tee! You wanted me to be



independent of other people and look to you for the way I should feel myself, cut myself off from the world, and join you in some crazy idea about being different. When I'm with Ben, I don't feel any different from anybody in the world." (164)

Not only the domestic problem, Lorraine and Theresia also treated unfairly by the society. Teresa does not care what the neighbors think of them, and she doesn't understand why Lorraine does care. Feeling rejected both by her neighbors and by Teresa, Lorraine finds comfort in talking to Ben. Lorraine reminds Ben of his estranged daughter, and Lorraine finds in Ben a new father to replace the one who kicked her out when she refused to lie about being a lesbian.

## 2.2 Plot

As Mario Klarer stated, "plot is the logical interaction of the various thematic elements of a text which lead to a change of the original situation as presented at the outset of the narrative. An ideal traditional plot line encompasses the following four sequential levels: exposition—complication/rising action—climax or turning point—resolution." (15). Each levels are not limited to the regulation as what Klarer stated. They can be changed as writer wants to show the different work. To make it easier in doing the analysis, the writer will explain the plot of every main character as the following paragraph

*The Women of Brewster Place* by Gloria Naylor is a novel told in seven stories. Those seven stories, six are centered on individual characters and the final story is about the entire community. Talking about the plot, it must be a little bit complicated; each character has their own story and the way that story goes. *The*

*Women of Brewster Place* begins with a section “dawn” where Naylor explain how the district named Brewster Place exist. Brewster Place is a housing development in an unnamed city which built by the alderman with some sort of political issues. The alderman wanted the realty company to build their new shopping center in northern section of town and as an afterthought, they agreed to erect four double-housing units on some worthless land in the badly crowded district. Then Naylor starts to introduce the characters one by one starting from the character named Mattie Michel. She leaves her parent’s house and moves to Brewster Place because she gets pregnant by a man whom his father dislike very much named Butch Fuller. Mattie living away from her family with a son. She takes a job but the salary that she gets is not enough to get a comfortable house for her and Basil (her son), fortunately she met Ms. Eva Turner, an old kind African-American woman who takes Mattie to her house in Brewster Place.

The second character introduced by Naylor is Etta Mae Johnson. She is kind of materialistic woman whom pursues happiness by dating a rich man. After a long journey of running from one man to the other man, she meets again with Mattie Michel her childhood friend at Brewster Place. Meanwhile Kiswana Browne has chosen to live in Brewster Place voluntarily. She left her family in Linden Hills (where black middle-class live) and she also dropped out from the college because she believes she do make real effect of social change in the black community by gathering with other black and fight for their social right.

Lucielia Louis Turner is a granddaughter of Ms. Eva Turner. She also known as Ciel grew up with Mattie and Basil. Ciel has a daughter named Serafine



from a man named Eugene whose constantly treats her and their daughter terribly and even he left them. Another character exposed in the story is Cora Lee who began life as a little girl who loved playing with new baby dolls. As a grown woman she continues to love the feel and smell of new babies, but once they grow, she is frustrated and hate of seeing her children playing around. As the last part, Naylor introduces a lesbian couple. When Lorraine and Teresa first move onto Brewster Place, the other women are relieved that they seem like nice girls who will not be after their husbands. But soon the neighbors start to notice the loving looks that pass between the two women, and soon the other women in the neighborhood reject Lorraine's gestures of friendship.

Each character in the novel has their own journey till they finally met and live together in Brewster Place. *As the time running*, the problem of each character further complicates their life, for the character Mattie Michel her story climax happened when she finds her son whom she loves so very much growing up to be a troubled young man whom is unable to claim responsibility for what he did. One night, he kills a man in a bar fight and he is arrested. Mattie does everything to help her son out from prison and finally Basil free but left Mattie forever. It hurts but Mattie has to deal with it. She turns a lot to God until one day she invites Etta Mae Johnson to go to church with one mission; helping Etta to get back to the right track where she can learn how to love someone. Etta figures out that she has to be rich and the easiest way to reach it by dating rich man. But the fact Etta meets Reverend Woods. She is taken by his looks, wealth, and status, but after sleeping with him, she realizes it was all just a fantasy and all that he wanted only



sex. She is confused, seems like she is having an empty life because she only has money and be rich in her life for so long. Mattie is the only person she shares everything with and since they are so close, Mattie's present is very helping in fixing Etta's life. Etta leaves feeling broken, but her spirit is restored once she finds out that Mattie has stayed up all night waiting for her. This moment realized her that her perspective on life goes wrong for so long.

Mattie Michel as the matriarchal figure in the novel also helps Lucielia Louis Turner facing the problem of her domestic life. Because of the financial reason, Eugene wants Ciel to abort their third child because he feels sick about the children. Shortly, he comes home to say that he found a new job in Maine and must leave right away. His lying is obvious that he just wants to leave Ciel and the children. While Lucielia and Eugene are fighting, Serafina chases a roach into an electric socket with a fork. She is electrocuted and dies. Ciel is really about be crazy. In this situation, Mattie is the one who begins to release Lucielia's sadness of loosing Serafina by bathing her until she falls asleep in her crying. Meanwhile Kiswana's decision to live alone far from her family totally not what her parents want. Kiswana and her mother have several short arguments about the perspective of fighting for black people humanity right. Her mother argues that it can be done in other way, as like what her mother and her father did. Take a job in government then step by step do something for black. But Kiswana has different perspective, Kiswana calls her mother "a white-man's nigger" because she claimed what her parents did is not the real action that can make black people's life better. They are just a kind of looser that selfish whom always fulfill their needs first.

Living in Brewster Place inspire Kiswana to provoke people to find the justice and demand the boundary “wall” to be crushed. It is not an easy one, most of them already give up and having the human right just seems like a big dream. Besides Kiswana also quite aware what happen with Cora Lee, her problem by not letting her children to socialize and feeling the disgust of seeing they grow up make Kiswana tries to open Cora’s eye that it is the way children grow where they need to socialize and educate. Kiswana asks her a favor and to pacify Kiswana, Cora Lee agrees to take her children to a Shakespeare play in the local park. As she watches the actors on stage and her children in the audience she is filled with remorse for being a more responsible parent. She realizes and starts to do all the parenting stuffs in a good way. She will start helping them with homework and taking them to school. She comes home that night filled with good intentions. She will encourage her children, and they can grow up to be important and talented people. Therefore Kiswana’s big help to Cora is very helpful in dealing with parenting issues caused by the horrible childhood memory.

The last comer Lorraine and Teresa is having a conflict when Lorraine finds comfort in talking to Ben, the old alcoholic handyman of Brewster Place. Lorraine reminds Ben of his daughter, and Lorraine finds in Ben a new father to replace the one who kicked her out when she confessed about being a lesbian. One night after an argument with Teresa, Lorraine decides to go visit Ben. As she passes through the alley near the wall, she is attacked by C.C. Baker and his friends, all six of the boys rape her leaving her near death. Lorraine tries to fight



back then she picks up a brick to protect herself. She almost beats Ben to death before Mattie can reach her and stop her.

After the incident of Lorraine's raping, all women in the building help her in healing the rape trauma. It seems that each problem already solved and as *the last turning point*, when Kiswana is having a plan to collect money from each resident as the first step to bring "wall" problem to law court while they also will have a party, the plan does not run so well when the rain comes. This effort seems quite impossible because it is hard to fight the system, but despite the pain and suffering represented in the novel. Mattie Michel, Etta Mae Johnson, Kiswana Browne, Luciellia Louise Turner, Cora Lee and The Two (Lorraine and Theresa) live in dreams even though at the end of story the wall still exists, they finally find their home. Physically Brewster Place with all the darkness and the "wall" still waits to die but the spirit and the dream of those seven women is alive.

### 2.3 Setting

According to Abrams, "The overall setting of a narrative work is general locale, historical time and social circumstances in which its action occurs; the setting of a single episode or scene within such a work is the particular location in which it takes" (284). In other word, the term setting refers to the point of time and place, which the event of the plot occurs.

In *The Women of Breswster Place*, the story takes place in an unnamed urban industrial city in the northern half of the United States. As reflected in the following passage; "Brewster Place was the bastard child of several clandestine



meetings between the alderman of the sixth district and the managing director of Unico Company” (1). It seems that Brewster Place came from something unplanned but in fact Brewster place was born from some political needs, the alderman wanted the realty company to built their new shopping center in northern section of town and as an afterthought, they agreed to erect four double-housing units on some worthless land in the badly crowded district. As seen in the following quotation; “and the alderman could use the construction to support his bid for mayor in the next election” (1), the alderman even did not care about the condition of Brewster Place where unhealthy and socially disoriented as long as that building brought him a benefit. In smoke-filled room, Brewster Place was conceived.

Later, the new shopping center became a major business district, but in order to control some of auxiliary streets had to be walled off. There were some parties that against the plan, but there was no one to fight for Brewster Place. The neighborhood was now filled with people who had no political influence; people who were dark haired--dark-skinned, the wall came up and Brewster Place became a dead-end street. From that dead-end street the story of Mattie Michel, Etta Mae Johnson, Kiswana Browne, Cora Lee, The Two (Lorraine and Theresa) begun.

## 2.4 Point of View

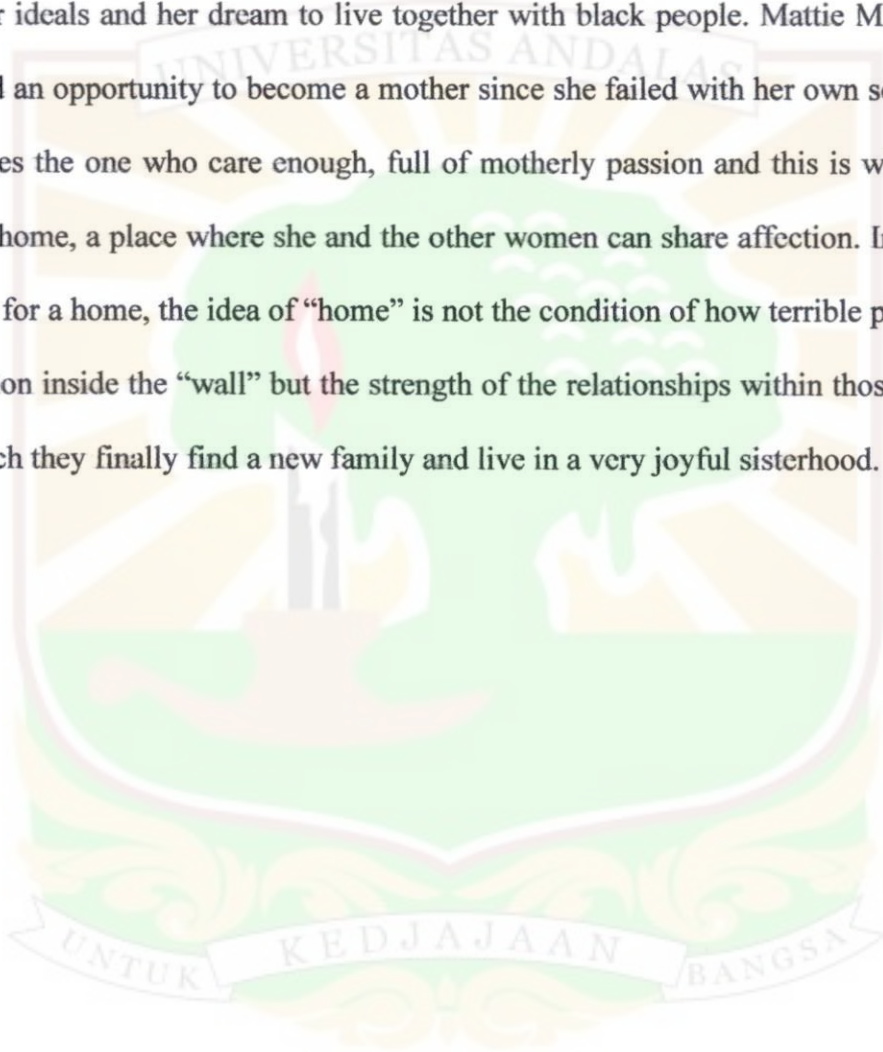
Point of view refer to Klarer is the way in which a text presents person, events, and setting (20). In novel *The Women of Brewster Place*, Gloria Naylor as

the author applies third person narrator to develop the story. Gloria Naylor as the narrator becomes someone outside the story, he used “he” or “she” which then use to refer to the characters. To build the story, Naylor used limited third-person deep penetration to develop the story, Orson Scott Card in his book *Character and Viewpoint* stated “... deep penetration, in which we do experience the scenes as if we were seeing them through the viewpoint character’s eyes” (167). In the novel, Naylor made the reader see the series of events through the seven women’s point of view, so the reader will be affected by their value, knowledge, and beliefs. Although, Naylor uses third person point of view, she could share the idea of black feminism by presenting the dialogue, action, setting, value that contained the issue of black feminism.

## 2.5 Theme

Theme of story is the fundamental ideas which are exposed in a literary world. As what stated by Abrams, “Theme is sometimes used interchangeably with motif, but the term is more useful applied to a general concept or doctrine, whether implicit or asserted, which an imaginative work is designed to incorporate and make persuasive to the reader” (170). *The Women of Brewster Place* has one central theme, *searching for home*. Where the residents of Brewster Place have migrated to Brewster Place from their parents’ no matter where they come from, they have ended up at Brewster Place and they have chosen call it home. The residents of Brewster Place are constantly searching for a home, to continue their life as the only way to escape from their past where no

place for them. For Mattie, her search for a home is her efforts to take care and raise her child, Basil. The journey from one home to another is repeated in every character in the novel. Brewster Place, though its falling apart, offers Etta a form of comfort she has long lived without. It also offers Kiswana the opportunity to live out her ideals and her dream to live together with black people. Mattie Michel is offered an opportunity to become a mother since she failed with her own son. She becomes the one who cares enough, full of motherly passion and this is what she called home, a place where she and the other women can share affection. In every search for a home, the idea of "home" is not the condition of how terrible the physical condition inside the "wall" but the strength of the relationships within those walls in which they finally find a new family and live in a very joyful sisterhood. .





## CHAPTER III

### GLORIA NAYLOR'S LIFE EXPERIENCES

#### RELATED TO BLACK WOMEN STRUGGLE IN AMERICA

*The Women of Brewster Place* is a novel which reveals and tells about some feminist issues. This novel has published for the first time in 1982 written by African-American author Gloria Naylor. In 1989, it was adapted into miniseries by Oprah Winfrey's Harpo Productions. Despite the title, the novel explores the lives of seven women in an urban setting and examines relationships, both in terms of friendship and including homosexual relationships.

Since the real fact about this novel that it is written by black female writer and the using of expressive approach in this analysis, therefore this third chapter is explained and talk about the author's biography, life and career. The purpose of this chapter is to show the correlation or relation between the background of the author and the work *The Women of Brewster Place*.

#### 3.1. Biography and Life of Gloria Naylor

The African-American author Gloria Naylor was born on January 25, 1950 in New York City. She was the first child from Roosevelt Naylor and Alberta Mc Alpin. She was raised in New York by working-class parents. As found in *Conversation With Gloria Naylor* edited by Maxine Lavon Montgomery, as Naylor grew up, her parents were farmer from Robinsonville, Mississippi, and her mother was especially determined that her children Gloria and her two younger sisters received the best education that could be provided for them. This is the

only reason why her parents moved to New York. When Naylor was young, her mother encouraged her to read and keep a journal. Even though her mother barely had any education, but she loved to read. Her mother encouraged her to write when she began to exhibit creative ability at the age of seven. When Gloria was old enough to sign her name, her mother began to take her to the library. Therefore Naylor became began to write poem and stories as a child (Montgomery viii).

A conversation between Gloria Naylor and Donna Perry 1991 in *Conversation With Gloria Naylor*, when Donna Perry asked what her mother likes, she answered, "I think I kept writing as a child because I had my mother as a model. She always encourages us to dream. Whatever you wanted to do, she would just be behind you. And she never made me feel odd. I was an odd child; I was extremely introvert, very quiet" (Naylor, 76). Naylor was just so very lucky for having a very supportive mother. Her mother let her read a poem or a story and she would encourage Naylor to write. All because she totally understands that Naylor could not express what she feels literally to other people. Naylor kept going to write through her. From her own writing spirit and also her mother's encouragement Naylor began to write everything that she felt and anything that happened to her people.

As found in bookrags.com, in 1968 when she graduated from high school, instead of attending college as what her parents wished, she became a Jehovah's Witness, This decision was influenced by Martin Luther King. Naylor felt that she needed to work to change the world, and the Witnesses' notion of government



seemed a perfect solution to her. For that decision, she travelled through New York and the South from 1968 to 1975. After she returned to New York, she earned her degree in English from Brooklyn College in 1981 (<http://www.bookrags.com/biography/gloria-naylor/>). While she was studying, she also working as a telephone operator in New York City hotels, she pursued a degree in nursing. However, when she realized and it became clear that she preferred her literature classes than nursing, she transferred to a major in English. As an interested reader from childhood, she already admired such writers as Austen, Dickens, the Brontes, Faulkner, Ellison, and Baldwin. In a conversation with Angels Carabi in 1992, she recognized that all of these writers were either "male or white";

"Black women have been writing in this country for over a hundred years. They began to proliferate in the 1930s during the Harlem Renaissance, and they continued to grow and build on each other. In the mid 1960s and the 1970s, we began to question definitions of "American Literature". Is it just simply the literature produced by the white-upper-middle-class male ? or are the other realities that constitute this country ? look at those "invisible" black females making all that noise. Do they have a history ? do they have a reality ? yes, definitely. I had read Faulkner, Hemingway, the Brontes, Dickens, Thackeray, Emerson, Melville, Poe, and Hawthorne. I love that kind of literature and it taught me about language, But it did not teach me about my reality" (Naylor, 113).



Naylor learnt a lot from other white American writers, and yet they introduce Naylor how to create and make a story. Until finally she realized there was something missing, the story that she read, none of them talked about her own story. This realization opened her eye that black female writers were still invisible. Therefore she tried to make something different, she started to write about her own stories. She started to change her vision of American Literature.

### 3.2 Gloria Naylor's writing Career

Gloria Naylor wrote novels that emphasized the strengths of women, especially African American women and the effects on the lives of African-American women of racism and sexism. Since her first great inspiring work *The Women of Brewster Place* (1982), Naylor keep writing about her people. Therefore she has wrote some other novels; *Linden Hills* (1985), *Mama Days* (1988) and *Baileys Café* (1992) (Montgomery xiii). In case of *The Women of Brewster Place* as her starting line as a writer, Naylor embraces her unique black, female and working-class-background self, even she draws the rich heritage of African-American in giving form and essence to her fictional works. Her first novel *The Women of The Brewster Place* totally talk about the painful life of Afro-American women. Since she consciously realized that all she has to tell in writing is her own story, there are some Naylor's personal life that much or less contributing in her writing. In case of *The Women of Brewster Place*, the center characters; seven African-American women whose having a miserable life actually influenced by some special persons in Naylor's life as what she

mentioned in *Conversation With Gloria Naylor*, a conversation with William Goldstein in 1983;

“The women I never knew personally, but I have known that spirit, I have definitely known that life. That’s how those characters were born. But they loved for me as characters with their own personalities and I let them have it. I wanted to immortalize the spirit I saw in my grandmother, my great aunt and my mom. The two numbers that are mentioned in the novel are the addresses of two buildings my grandmother in Harlem”. (Naylor, 6)

Practically, the character of seven African-American women in *The Women of Brewster Place* is purely fiction. Naylor created the name and the characterization from the way she valued the life of African-American women. As what she stated above there is something that she would like to immortalize, the spirit from women in her own life; her grandmother, her aunt and her mom. What she meant by “the spirit” is quite general, it includes the rebellion, be free from male oppression, the searching of hope where women could live as they supposed to be, and they would share “the spirit” in places that were unimportant to the outside world, gaining strength from each other in many ways. In her conversation with Kay Bonneti in 1988, as what Kay Bonneti asked about how Naylor came up with the whole idea in her first novel *The Women of Brewster Place*;

“ It came because I was twenty-seven years old and I had not read any book that reflected my experience. It took me that long to learn that there such books. And I mean my experience as a black female. If I just have one book in me, I want it to be all about what I haven’t read a hell of a lot



about. And that was all about me. The reason for the structure of the work was because I knew that one character, one female protagonist could not even attempt to represent the richness or diversity of the black female experience.” (Naylor, 53)

Naylor wanted that a book that tells about the story of her people. This purpose strengthen her willingness to create a story that describe her life and how world treat her people. She also stated that there is one character that influenced by the real person in her life. Naylor brings her mother into the story as mother of Kiswana Browne. As what Naylor admitted in her conversation with Donna Perry in 1991, when Donna Perry asked her is there any of her mother figure in all these women she has created, Naylor answered;

“I’m sure there must be. I’m positive that if I ever had the inclination or the time to take them apart I would find things that would surprise me. Maybe she’s there in a mother that worried excessively—Kiswana Brown’s mother in Brewster Place, for example. The kind of mother who would come visits you and check out your apartment.” (Naylor, 79)

Naylor confidently explain that how her mother’s present in the story has similarity with her mom whom really care about what is she doing. This is exactly what is happening with character named Kiswana Browne. Gloria Naylor can not deny how big the contribution of her mother in her writing career. She also emphasis that; “With *The Women of Brewster Place*, I was trying to and also to give a microcosm of black women in America—black women who are faced by a wall of racism and sexism that you have to come up against.” (Naylor). She

always be honest in her writing, she wants the reader really get the real portraits of black women life. Therefore her goal is to campaign against racism and sexism through literary work.

Speaking about sexism which faced by seven African-American women in *The Women of Brewster Place*, in conversation with William Goldstein in 1983 Naylor argues that;

“I believes, the women of Brewster Place—Etta Mae Johnson, Mattie Michel, Kiswana Browne, Lucielia Louise Turner, Cora Lee, and The Two—face the problem of womanhood in society where women are undervalued and abused. Sometimes it is very violent and a life is saved, sometimes it is less dramatic and there is a kind of cultural awakening from woman reaching out to another” (Naylor, 5)

Undervalue and abusive action toward the seven characters in the novel caused what Naylor called as cultural awakening where women reaching out each other. This is what really happens in the novel, a condition which unites them into some sort of family where they can share everything each other. Besides, Naylor also explore racism issue through *The Women of Brewster Place*. The “wall” is simply describing the racism toward African-American people. As Naylor stated in her conversation with William Goldstein in 1983;

“The wall that makes the street a dead-end; It was put up to keep apart the people who are down and out. And despites the differences of their background, all of the women in the novel share the fact that they all live with this wall. Now, it is not something you dwell on everyday of your



life, but it is something you know is part and parcel of your existence. Yet you go on doing the things you do, like these women did: they raised their children, they had their sorrows, their happiness—but it is always there.”  
(Naylor, 5)

The passage above explains the way of racism appears in the novel. Naylor creates a seven interconnected stories in which the characters have to deal with racism caused by some political issue. For bringing racism case in *The Women of Brewster Place*, Naylor has been completed in describing the basic problem of African-American women. In case of racism, the seven women keep their life even though they must deal with the fact that they are undervalued and discriminated be society.

*The Women of The Brewster Place* with seven interconnected stories of strong women whose support for one another enables them to survive despite crushing poverty and personal tragedy established Naylor as a powerful voice in fiction writing, and also from her writings career it could be concluded that Gloria Naylor is a kind of author that tries to see the black women's struggle from other perspective; the inheritance of African culture. Besides, she also tries to describe the black women fighting and struggling in the world named patriarchy.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PORTRAIT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL UNFAIR

#### TREATMENT IN GLORIA NAYLOR'S

#### *THE WOMEN OF BREWSTER PLACE*

Throughout most of history women generally had fewer or even no legal rights and career opportunities than men, this polemic becoming harder toward the black community. The life of African-American before and during the African-American Civil Right Movement was totally depressed. Their life regulated and controlled by white, almost in all sectors of life. Racism happened even brutally destroy the life of black people, particularly the black women. Since the existence of patriarchy, those depressions influence the domestic life of black people, especially the relationship between husband and wife, father and daughter.

This chapter will show the portrait of black women' life in Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place*. This novel shows depressions, domestic violence and also social unfair treatment from the social life. The writer found some statements in the novel as the main data to prove the problem that has been claimed in the first chapter. The writer quotes some statement in the novel as the main data about the abuse such as physical, mental, and verbal abuse that addressed toward a black wife by her own husband or her father and also about how the social surrounding perspective by being black. Also in this chapter, the writer analyzed the problem by applying black feminist criticism that shows discrimination toward black women that mostly occurred in Southern America. Action creates the reaction; in this novel there are also women reactions in facing



the oppression and to protect their life. The behavior of man who inhumanly does the physical, mental, and verbal abuse toward black woman, make women do some reactions, to save their life and the children and get the happier life.

#### 4.1 Domestic Violence and Social Unfair Treatment

##### 4.1.1 Domestic Violence

United States Department of Justice on [usdoj.gov](http://usdoj.gov) defines domestic violence as a pattern of abusive behavior, any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. It can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, terrorize, threaten, blame, hurt, or wound someone (<http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov/domviolence.htm>). The threaten acts cause so many bad impacts certainly toward the weakest party. Actually most of the victims of domestic violence are women and children, where the term domestic includes violence by an intimate partner and by other family members.

Meanwhile the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women through Mehr Khan the director of UNICEF Innocenti Research Center in a journal entitle *Domestic Violence Against Women and Girls* also defines violence against women as; “Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (2). Women are unable to make their own decisions, voice their own opinions or protect themselves and their



children. Their human rights are denied and their lives are stolen from them. In case of black people, generally the black man behaves so cruelly just to control the life of women and the violence takes many forms; physical, sexual and psychological. It happens all the time or once in a while for unreasonable reasons. The violence does not only happen in private life but also occurs in public, where black women humiliated in social life by having unfair treatment that forbid them to be more independent.

*The Women of The Brewster Place* describes the suffering life of black women. Most of them just become the victim of the financial problem and the desperate feeling by being a poor people. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Naylor view the abusive action and undervalued toward the seven character in the novel forced them to rely on each other and they have to face the painful life through togetherness. The following subchapter is described the domestic violence in the novel, how does it actually happen and also the bad impact of those violence. The writer divides three kind of domestic violence that appears in the novel; physical abuse, verbal abuse and psychological abuse.

#### **4.1.1.1 Physical Abuse**

In domestic life the physical abuse addressed to women whom become the blamed party of the poverty. Actual physical violence may involve hitting, slapping, shoving, grabbing, pinching, biting, hair-pulling, etc. Physical abuse also includes denying a partner medical care. It may involve a real physical damage sufficient. In this novel, most of the women characters are married and none of them get the happiness from their marriage

(<http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov/domviolence.htm>). The physical violence happened in character named Mattie Michael, the matriarchal figure among other characters. In Mattie's family the father domination grew wildly even getting worse. Samuel Michael (Mattie's father) had never been a talkative man, anything he decided no one dared to ask. In this novel Mattie Michel is the one who experience the physical violence, she faced this condition when she got pregnant with a man named Butch Fuller. She really loved the baby in her belly and loved Butch Fuller with all his good and bad. However their love grew in wrong direction, Mattie got pregnant with Butch before they got married. This condition getting worse since Butch is the man whom her father hated most because Butch had a very different opinion about religion with him. Butch chooses to be free without any beliefs; "You folks and your aint's. You ain't supposed to do this and you ain't supposed to do that. That's why I never been to Christian—to me it means you can't enjoy life and since we only here once, that seems a shame" (15). Butch believed that there is no such a good effect of being a Christian. Mattie's father who is kind of a faithful Christian totally hated Butch Fuller, he assumed that he is a sinner. The pregnancy made Samuel got angry because Mattie did it with a man that surely he hates because of the different religion.

Mattie's father got angry so brutally, he even lost his mind by hitting his own daughter, as described from the following passage, "Mattie's body contracted in a painful spasm each time the stick smashed down her legs and back, and she curled into a tight knot, trying to protect her stomach." (23). Once Samuel got angry he even did not act such a religious man, all what he thought just let his



anger controlled him. He even wanted to kill Butch who had sneaked into his home and distorted the faith and trust he had in his child. Samuel even blinded by his own anger and did something stupid;

“Sam seemed like a man coming out of a trance. He stared stupidly at the barrel of the gun and then at the stick in his fist and then at the girl balled up in spasm on the floor.. A slow moan came from the pile of torn clothes and bruised flesh on the floor. Sam Michael looked at it, saw that it was his daughter, and he dropped the stick and wept.” (24)

The passage above shows how terrible Sam could be, he let himself hurt his daughter by shooting her. Mattie was wrong with her got pregnant before she legally married, but it did not mean that she can not be responsible of the terrible thing she did. Besides, having a baby is the most natural thing to human being and nothing to be ashamed. Mattie got hurt just because her father arrogance by not allowing her to find what she wanted to do in life. It is clearly that she had feeling to Butch and she loved the fact that she is pregnant and soon would be a mother. However all Mattie's dreams became a nightmare where her own father hit her as the consequence for falling in love with the man he hated so much.

From Mattie's experience of physical abuse, Naylor shows the reader a life of human being who are bounded still by the patriarchy thought, it just cut-off all women dreams to find their love, their life and be what they wanted to be is just a dream. Surely there was a way where Mattie escaped from her father's craziness. She decided to leave her home, it was hard the she had to leave her lovely mother too but the baby was all that she worried about.

#### 4.1.1.2 Verbal Abuse

Kerby Anderson from U Leadership in his article entitle “Verbal Abuse” defines verbal abuse occurs when one person uses words and body language to criticize another person. Words are far more powerful and permanent than people imagine, where verbal abuse is any use of language that causes someone harm. It hurtful and usually attacks the nature and abilities of the partner and also manipulative which goals is to control and manipulate. Where in domestic life the domain player/the husband yell, scream and humiliate the wife as what they want, without thinking the impact of being rude toward their own wife.

Lucielia Louise Turner (Ciel) faced this kind of domestic violence, her husband Eugene keep being cruel in talking to Ciel, he felt jealous toward their own children, Ciel’s friends and also Ciel’s social life. He feels that Ciel is much care and love the children than him; “You don’t give a damn about me. Everybody’s more important than me—that kid, your friends, everybody. I’m just chickenshit around her, huh ?” (93). Eugene felt jealous of what Ciel had in her life, he also wanted to have her for him only, even he hated the children because they took so many attention from Ciel. A husband, who had to protect his wife, did not respect her at all. Ciel who is the one who manage the household need, take care of the children, and also in this case of black family, being a working mother treated unfairly. The hurtful word keep went out from his mouth just as the way he felt that he matters over Ciel; “And what the hell we gonna feed it when it gets here, huh—air ? with two kids and you on my back, I ain’t never



gonna have nothing.” He came and grabbed her by the shoulders and was shouting into her face. “Nothing, do you hear me, nothing !” (95). This is kind of verbal violence happened through the yelling and hurtful words, Ciel becomes nothing in a family. Ciel felt lonely, no place to share, her partner decided to leave her and the children. Besides, it also indicates that Eugene is such a man who tries to escape from his responsibility by being a father and husband whom supposed to feed and totally care toward the whole family, no matter how hard the life that they faced at the time. The classic reason “poverty” became the main reason why Eugene left his family.

Another quotation that shows how Eugene totally blames Ciel for their lack of money, “I’m fucking sick of never getting ahead. Babies and bills, that’s all you good for” (94). It indicates that Ciel was just an obstacle of Eugene’s life, he even looked so frustrated, he hated his own family. On the other hand, that quotation also implied that he could not have a life that full of responsibilities, he wanted to escape from that circumstances and be free from all stuffs as a father. Having an irresponsible husband makes Ciel had to face the reality and handle all the household stuffs alone. She was alone, confused and having no idea what to do. She wanted to hate him but on the other side she still had love for Eugene;

“It was all there; the frustration of being left alone, sick, with a month-old baby; her humiliation reflected in the caseworker’s blue eyes for the unswearable “you can find him to have it, but can’t find him to take care of it” smile; the raw urges that crept, uninvited, between her thighs on

countless nights; the eternal whys all meshed with the unexplainable love". (91)

Eugene left Ciel with tons of responsibilities. A tall skinny black man with arrogance and selfishness came to her just to set her up into a horrible life which full of emptiness. Moreover, she also got confuse between anger and love, she wondered why after all he did to her she still had love for him. Eugene succeeds to torture Ciel by his words and he felt that he really matters for her.

Ciel really had a tough time when Eugene decided to leave her and their little baby, Serena. When Ceil tried to walk-out and stop crying for what Eugene did to her and Serena, inside she realized that this is not the end of the world; "And, she thought, I don't feel anything now. But soon, very soon, I will start to hate you. I promise—I will hate you. And I'll never forgive my self for not having done it sooner—soon enough to have saved my baby. Oh dear God, my baby" (100). She was simply tired of hurting and this is one of Ciel's way to struggle from the thing that saddens her lately. Being a single parent because the husband can not feed them anymore was hard, but she now has Sercna whom she supposed to take care of. Ciel has something worth to fight about. Then she decided to let it be and as time goes by she believes that her life will change. Serena is the only reason for her to get her life back to normal. However the reality wasn't say so and it wasn't take too long for Ciel's life getting worse. Serena was sick and left Ciel forever.

When Ciel seemed can't handle any pressure in her life, Naylor starts to present other women's ability to struggle. Mattie, the matriarchal figure in the story came to help Ciel out from the darkness. She's became Ciel's friend and



help Ciel in her daily needs until finally Ciel capable enough to face the reality, "And Ciel lay down and cried. But Mattie knew the tears would end. And she would sleep. And morning would come" (105). This is where the sisterhood appears, Ciel who used to be the victim of verbal abuse finally can pass through all the messy things in her life with a little help from her neighbor named Mattie Michel.

#### 4.1.1.3 Psychological Abuse

The National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect on a journal in [findcounseling.com](http://www.findcounseling.com) defines emotional abuse as acts or omissions by the parents or other caregivers that have caused, or could cause, serious behavioral, cognitive, emotional, or mental disorders. Also, Psychological abuse causes damage in the victim as she is made to believe she is worthless and at fault. Mental abuse interferes with a person's ability to develop healthy and stable patterns of relating to others. (<http://www.findcounseling.com/journal/child-abuse/emotional-abuse.htm>).

A woman character in this novel also faces several violence that makes her distressed mentally. It begins when Core Lee still a little girl, she loved doll too much. Her parents felt something wrong with their daughter, how come that Cora lee still loved doll when all of her friends started to play together rather than play with doll. Somehow, her father did something hurt toward Cora Lee. When Christmas came, her father didn't give any present for her, as usual Cora lee always wait for a doll present every Christmas day. However that time she didn't get that present. Core felt that she wasn't loved by her own family until her mother explains that one day she can have a real baby. Her mother word's makes

she highly wanted a baby and keep it just like how she kept her dolls. Her wish to have a baby finally came true and she loved the baby so much. But something weird happened, she only loved the baby but didn't want the baby to grow up;

"She wondered at the change in the fine silky strands that moved with the slightest Force of her breath and raised to tickle her nostrils when she inhaled. In a few years. They would grow tight and kinky and rough, She'd hate to touch them then, because the child would cry when she yanked the comb through its matted hair". (112)

Then, she hated her own baby when the baby grows up. For such a silly reason, she hated to take care of the children when they were getting more active and some physical appearance changes happened. Cora lee domestic life day by day became worst, her husband also treat her just like a crappy thing whom no need to be respected, "I told ya to stop them goddamned children from jumping over my goddamned head all the goddamned day ! now I'm gonna call the police—do you hear me ? the goddamned Police !" (109). The way of her husband treat her just making her even more and more hates all about the growing up children. She had to face too much pain, the dilemma from her childhood memories and also having a husband whom never cares how hard and how busy when Cora Lee must giving care for the whole family. The way her husband hate their children just makes Cora more realize how much she loved their children as a baby;

"She gently examined the side of baby's head to see if the ball had left a mark and kissed the tiny bruise. Why couldn't they just stay like this—so soft and easy to care for ?.. oh, for them to stay like this, when they could



be fed from her body and they stayed where I put them and were so easy to keep clean” (109).

The way Core loves her child is just so wrong. She doesn't want them to grow up and admire baby too much. She claimed that baby is much easy to take care of and also they don't have to grow up because she loves them to stay like a baby. This condition became worse where finally Cora Lee also never wanted to socialize with the neighbors, when one of her neighbor Kiswana Browne invite her and the children in a drama performance that specially held for children, Cora Lee hardly rejected the invitation, “This stuff here—Shakespeare and all that. It'll be too deep for them and they'll start acting up and embarrassing me in front of all those people”. (119). Cora lee didn't want to let her children socialize with people, also she ashamed by the children growth activities, she claimed those as a naughty, disgusting, wild and other people no need to know.

Through Cora Lee, Naylor portraits another kind of domestic violence in black women life. Cora lee's childhood memory affected her psychologically where she does not want her baby to grow because she thinks that it's so disgusting to see her baby losing innocents. Cora Lee avoids the neighborhood and any other social activities as one of other way to keep her baby for her self.

#### **4.1.2 Social Unfair Treatment**

For black women, sexism and racism are two things that they have to deal with. In social life they treat unfairly, in finding a job, making a relationship for example, even they also get those unfair treatment from other black. In *The*

*Women of Brewster Place* this conflict also raises and happened in some characters. Etta Mae Johnson, She would like to have a better life by finding a rich man. The only reason of loving someone depends on how rich he is. She is an independent and passionate woman searching for love and good times. This aim come up with a reason, Etta spent her teenage years in constant trouble in Rock Vale;

“Rock Vale had no place for a black woman who was not unwilling to play by the rules. The white in Rock vale were painfully reminded of this rebellion when she looked them straight in the face while putting in her father’s order at the dry goods store, when she reserved her sirs and mams for those she thought deserving and when she smiled only if pleased, regardless of whose presence she was in.” (60)

Etta grew up in a place that never being kind toward black, where black people only took a part as a servant with white people as her boss. She felt the white people did not respect her because of her position as their slave and she is black. Etta who had a higher expectation than being a scrvant for whole life, decided to move to the other district; Brewster Place. Etta just had enough of being a poor person, she started to change her vision. One thing that she assumes as the right thing to do to be happy and be rich by finding a rich man. This is how the unfair social treatment shaping such a kind of defense action to keep struggle in a world that never been kind to African-American just because they are black.

Social unfair treatment also happened in black community itself. Theresa and Lorraine, the two who trapped in romantic interest and a new resident in



Brewster Place. They are lesbian, Theresa and Lorraine has a bad experience with man, that's why they decided to build this relationship. They feel more pleasant and no pressure by loving each other, much better than man ever did. Firstly, people don't know that they are lesbian, but when one by one people find something weird between them, people start to hate, underestimate and barely waiting them to go away from Brewster Place; "I wasn't gonna mention so filthy, but you forcing me." Sophie ran her tongue over her parch lips and narrowed her eyes at Lorraine. "You forgot to close your shades last night and I saw the two of you !" (145). People could not accept what happened between Theresa and Lorraine. They fought about the problem that occur between them, where Theresa is in her effort to make Lorraine surely believe that there's nothing wrong with this relationship. The people are the right party to be blamed. But Lorraine finally realized that she still won't able to be herself, so far Theresa kept controlling her life. Lorraine wants a normal life where she could interact with people and feel free to have chat with anyone, but Theresa thinks the opposite that she and Lorraine as the lesbian no need to be socialize and gathering with them, all they need is just being two forever;

"See, there you are again. Tee the teacher and Lorraine the student, who just can't get the lesson right. Lorraine, who just wants to be a human being—a lousy human being who's somebody's daughter or somebody's friend or even somebody's enemy. But they make me feel like a freak out there, and you try to me feel like one in here. That only place I've found

some peace, Tee, is in that damp ugly basement, where I'm not different,"  
(165)

They are totally different and one thing for sure, patriarchy still exists in this relationship. Theresa becomes a patriarchal figure in this relationship. Who act like a man whom always be a person that controlling Lorraine's life. Another humiliation toward the two comes from a man named C.C. Baker. Still because of the same reason that he can not accept they are lesbian and the arrogance of man that still wants to be the stronger than woman,

"I'm gonna show you something I bet you never seen before." C.C took the back of her head, pressed it into the crotch of his jeans, and jerkily rubbed it back and forth while his friend laughed. "Yeah, now don't that feel good ? see, that's what you need. Bet after we get through with you, you ain't never gonna make kiss no more pussy." (170).

Lorraine violated by C.C. Baker and his friend, not only physical violated but they also use cruel words in hurting Lorraine. Lorrain was raped, all these things started from the public opinion about their romance interest which assumed as something disgusting and socially unacceptable where homosexual relationship was kind of something that should be stopped.

Eta Mae Johnson and the two problem are two examples of social unfair treatment explored in the novel. Moreover, Naylor also brings another case of racism in *The Women of Brewster Place*. The story begins with the introduction of an area named Brewster Place, where there is political issue of the alderman willingness to build an elite shopping centre in northern section of town and as an



afterthought, they agreed to erect four double-housing units on some worthless land in the badly crowded district. To keep the luxury of the shopping center, the government built a "wall" which further complicates the condition of Brewster Place. The wall is simply symbolize racism, where black and white separated and poor and rich seems like a very different status which needs to be built a boundary to control that difference. As what Naylor stated about this wall in the last chapter, the seven women lived within the wall. The wall is the part of African-American people, no matter how they had their sorrow, their happiness, the wall will always be there.

Through Kiswana Browne, Naylor describes a character whom trying to fight the system. Kiswana is the one who constantly trying to fight against the racism. But it seems quite impossible since it is hard to fight the system that already exists for so long. but at least she tried to. The last chapter of *The Women of Brewster Place* the block party, where the resident of Brewster Place was having a party for collecting money to bring the case to court of law suddenly the rain came which destroyed the party. Actually it is more than just whether they able or not to collect some money, it is much more complicated that money problem. No matter how hard they tried to crush the wall, it is still there.

#### **4.2. Gloria Naylor's Feminist Idea in *The Women of Brewster Place***

This sub-chapter will describes some struggles of black women whom trying to be free from patriarchy, sexism and racism. Here, the writer divided the reactions into some points; confrontation and also female bonding (the

sisterhood). The confrontation of battered women over their men can be found in this novel, they are cursing behind their husband, and they also try to find another society to live. The writer finds two kinds of confrontation done by the seven characters in this story, personal and batches defensibility.

#### 4.2.1. Personal Defensibility

Each character has its own problem before they met. Most of them have to deal with the domestic problem. As what the previous point that describes the domestic violence and social unfair treatment, Mattie Michel decided to escape from her family alone where it seems impossible that her father could receive the fact that she is pregnant. Also Luciola Louise Turner with her domestic problem where her husband decided to leave her because of his less capability in earning money, the same case happened in other characters; Cora Lee, a woman that mentally depressed who love the baby only and doesn't want the baby grow up. Etta Mae Johnson also finds her own way to be happy by loving a guy for money only. Meanwhile Kiswana Browne finally finds her own way to be a black woman. She wants having life just like how black people live.

Kiswana Browne, a young woman from a middle class black family. Because of her idealistic and yearning to help others (the black people), she decided to leave her family, she dropped out of college and moved into Brewster Place to live among other African-American people. In making her wish come true, where the black people can live better, she face so many obstacles even it comes from her family, especially her mother. But Kiswana keeps on her way;



“No, mama, you’re not poor. And what you have and I have are totally different things. I don’t have a husband in real estate with a five-figure income and a home in Linden Hills—you do. What I have is weekly unemployment check and an overdrawn checking account at United Federal. So this studio on Brewster is all I can afford.” (83)

She doesn’t want to be like her mother, she wants to find her own way. Proud to be black and never want to have a glamour life if it has to be black whom faithfully do what white people ask to do just like her parents did. She feels embarrassed by being black as the right hand of white and always says yes for every single thing they ask to do is the only reason why she decided to find her own life by living with other black.

Her mother, who totally could not understand what her daughter wants keep trying to seduce her to come back to college and live together as like a family, “That’s not what I’m talking about, and you know it. These streets—this building—it’s so shabby and rundown. Honey, you don’t have to live like this.” (83). Her mother keep seduce her that living together with black people in rural area is completely not a life that good for her daughter. Even though this mother and daughter had different opinion about life as black, one thing that helps Kiswana’s to reach her dream, no matter how strong her mother wants to have Kiswana back home, her love for Kiswana never stop. She wanted all the best for her daughter, she really did. No matter how much she loves Kiswana, she had to let her daughter find her own way; “Mrs. Browne lifted Kiswana’s chin gently. “And the one lesson I wanted you to learn is not to be afraid to face anyone, not

even a crafty old lady like me who can outtalk to you.” And she smiled and winked.” (87). This is how the affection between mother and daughter solves the different perspective of a thing. As what Naylor admitted in her conversation with Donna Perry in 1991 at the previous chapter, when Donna Perry asked her is there any of her mother figure in all these women she has created, Naylor’s mother influenced the characterization in the story which reflected in Kiswana’s mother. This is Naylor’s personal life affected her work. Unconsciously this fact enrich the sense of affection between black women where finally they able to fight for their own freedom. The idea of personal defensibility is truly exist in the story. Each character finds its own way to escape from miserable life.

#### **4.3.2. Female Bonding (The Sisterhood)**

After all of the seven characters live in one resident named Brewster Place, they are starting to know each other. With the matriarchal figure in this story, Mattie Michel, the story begun to find another way in solving the problem which for so long faced individually. Each woman, in her own way takes a part in making a life in Brewster Place. The women are forced to rely on each other when the world seems to shut them out. Despite their differences, the women of Brewster Place are bound by a sense of community and sisterhood that enables them to deal with the everyday pressures they face in the male-dominated society in which they live. The relationship between Cora Lee and Kiswana and the relationship between Mattie and Ciel, for example. When Cora Lee seems never understand that a child never always be a baby, they will grow up and that is the fact. There Kiswana comes step by step making Cora Lee understood that she



must let her children grow up and go outside to see the world; "You know", Kiswana got off her knees and brushed the dust from the jeans, "they're probably that way from being cramped up this apartment all the time. Kids need space to move around in" (118). Kiswana never get bored to make Cora understand about what the children need, therefore finally Cora Lee realize that Kiswana was right. Cora lee starts to be open minded toward all of her children need.

Luciella louise turner finally could let her husband go. Her husband left her because of the poverty, at that time Ciel still being a naïve that she did not want her husband go away no matter how cruel her husband she still love him fullheartedly. Mattie saw Ciel problem and began to help her realize that she will be better without a husband who act like a jerk. Mattie can not leave Ciel in her sorrow, she took care of Ciel, "She sat on the edge of the bed and enfolded the tissue-thin body in her Huge ebony arms. And she rocked. Ciel's body was so hot it burned mattie when she first touched her, but she held on and rocked" (103). Mattie is the one who taking care of Ciel when she get sick, she wass taking care of Ciel with love and hope one day Ciel realize that she has to move on, leave this painful life and create her own happiness. Ciel who saw Mattie's good willing in taking care of her, understand that she doesn't need her husband anymore, she now already has a family in Brewster Place. Where in another case, Etta Mae Johnson finally realize that money isn't everything to be happy. Mattie keeps give her suggestions about loving someone, loving someone for money is not the true happiness.

Those seven women met and live in togetherness in Brewster Place where they came from different background and different experience of violence. They filled and helped each other to reach a better life. Even though it's not that easy to live together, but with one matriarchal figure as the social glue and the willingness to find a new home where they can feel safe and surrounding by people who loved each other, this group finally succeed to create a new atmosphere among them. They found a new life, a new hope and a new family in Brewster Place.

*The Women of Brewster Place* by Gloria Naylor shows the reader a work of sincerity where Naylor talks about the real life of black women in America through her fictional story. She describes every tiny details of black women condition under the male oppression and patriarchy, she portraits it through domestic violence and social unfair treatment. All begins with her questioning why there are no one tell the story about her people just the way it is, besides she had enough about the domination of male and white writer in literary work, therefore she stated that,

"Brewster Place was a reaction to the fact that most of what I had read did not reflect my reality. Ever since the third grade, I always wrote and always read voraciously and I had teachers who would throw books at me because they love black kid who can read ! so I sort of cut my literary teeth on English Classics and to this day that influence is still in my work." (Naylor, 85)

Her first novel is more like her first step in writing honestly about the fact of black women' life. Her experience as black women who ever live in a condition where



black female writing was not consider as a literary work, strengthen her spirit to keep writing about her people.

The seven major characters in the story are real for her as she claimed that she had known the spirit from some incredible black women around her, as explained in the previous chapter that she created the name and the characterization from the way she valued the life of black women also something she would immortalize, the spirit from the women in her own life. In *The Women of Brewster Place* Naylor portraits what black women suffer from, in domestic violence where physical, verbal and psychological abuse appears, Naylor shows the reader a life of human being who are bounded still by the patriarchy thought, it just cut-off all women dreams to find their love, their life and be what they wanted to be is just a dream which is barely to make that dreams come true. Through that painful life, somehow some reactions toward the violence appears. Naylor's feminist idea through her book *The Women of Brewster Place* described in two points; personal defensibility and the similar painful background of life which demand Mattie Michael, Etta Mae Johnson, Kiswana Browne, Luciellia Louise Turner, Cora Lee and the two (Lorraine and Theresa) to stick together, and unconsciously create a female bonding and sisterhood among them.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Black feminism is a theory which is proposed by Barbara Smith. In his theory, she describes the way black women voice their experience as black women who live under double oppression; sexism and racism. Smith's theory Black Feminism in her essay "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism" lays a foundation for the explosion of both Black feminist critical theory and the creative writings of Black women in the 1970s and 1980s. Her argument exposes the flaws of considering literature through either the exclusive lens of race, as Black literary criticism tends to do, or the exclusive lens of gender, as predominantly White feminist criticism tends to do. She suggests that it is Black women who are in the best position to create an effective criticism that provides an integrated consideration of the roles played by race, gender, class, and sexuality in literature.

The application of Black Feminism can also be found in literary works. Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place* is one of literary works which contains the issue of Black Feminism. In the novel, after analyzing the novel of Gloria Naylor, the writer comes to a conclusion that women are still under the domination of men especially in the black community in Southern America. The domestic violence such as physical, verbal and psychological abuse in black family occurred in the situation of poverty and depression of black women. The domestic violence occurred as black people struggle to find the way out to channel their anger and disappointment as a result of poverty.



The victim of this violence is always women, because physically they are weaker than men. The strong notion about black women as the lowest class in society makes it very difficult to be protested. However Gloria Naylor tries to figure out their hope inside the novel. Black feminist criticism wants black women to be independent and strong. Women characters in this novel represent the hope of black women to be free from patriarchal boundaries.

Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place* describes how black women in a family struggle to face the violence done by her husband and her father. Starting from personal confrontation then finally creating the female bonding and sisterhood, black women try to voice and deliver their ideas or disagreements. Besides the domestic violence and social unfair treatment issues brought in this novel, Gloria Naylor also presents the story in a unique way. *The Women of Brewster Place* tells seven interconnected stories of how the seven women in the novel; Mattie Michel, Etta Mae Johnson, Kiswana Browne, Luciellia Louise Turner, Cora Lee and The Two (Lorraine and Theresa) treated in society, since it has been crucial issue of black feminist that they are discriminated in life; social life, working life, domestic life, race, class and gender. Yet Gloria Naylor keeps her goals of writing where she brings the experience of being black woman.

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